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ABSTRACT

During the past two decades the Federal Government has become involved in programs for training, education, health, business, and housing, focusing on a variety of disadvantaged groups. Few programs have been specifically aimed at or involved a significant number of Asian-Americans. This probably reflects the traditions of social responsibility within this group, but it is also true that this group has been overlooked by the government. Programs are now getting underway aimed specifically at their needs, and they have now recognized that there is no stigma attached to involvement in Government programs. A task force has been established to develop recommendations concerning education and training for minority business enterprise. Since the Asian-American response to poverty, discrimination, and ethnic visibility has been the development of small business ownership, this entrepreneurial spirit must be kept alive and allowed to expand into areas from which it was once excluded. The task force concluded that this is possible and has proposed eight areas where federally assisted education and training could be used. (SA)

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Address presented at the Commencement Exercises at Lincoln University, San Francisco, California, July 29, 1973.

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here today with the graduating class, faculty, administration and friends of Lincoln University. To all of you I bring greetings from a Californian well known to all of you, Mr. Casper Weinberger, our Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and also from Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Assistant Secretary for Education, and Dr. John Ottina, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Designate, also a Californian.

An ancient Chinese saying credited to Confucius can be seen carved on a stone plate in the United Nation building. It says:

> "When the great WAY flourishes, the world will be a common state. Rulers will be elected according to their wisdom and ability, and mutual confidence and peace will prevail. Therefore, people will not only regard their parents as parents, their children as children, but those of others as their own. Old people will be able to enjoy their old age; young men will be able to employ their talents; juniors will respect their elders; helpless widows, orphans, and cripples will all be well cared for. Men will have their respective occupations, and women their homes. This will then be a true period of the Great Commonwealth."

I believe that we are very close to this "Great Commonwealth" which Confucius foresaw. Peace throughout the world is near at hand. The standard of living of the peoples of the world is improving every year.

Our contemporary system of transportation and communication has made it possible for man to solve the problems of time and space.

Today, there are few national communication boundaries. Our network of social ties is so interwoven that the consequences of contemporary events radiate instantaneously around the world.

Many have called the American educational system one of history's greatest social achievements. More than 63 million people, nearly 1/3 of our entire population, are now involved in education full time.

With the opening of school next September, more than 45 million young Americans will be enrolled in our public, elementary and secondary schools. Education's share of our gross national product has jumped from 4% to over 8% in less than 20 years. We are spending nearly $85 billion a year on public education at all levels. Public education accounts for the largest portion of State and local expenditures.

The United States has made education the catalyst for improvement of the social welfare for every individual. In this country, an equal opportunity for a sound and functional education is a well-established and highly regarded right of every American - regardless of race, sex, religion or place of origin! We believe that all educational programs should be designed in terms of the importance of the individual as a responsible and continuing contributor to progress in both personal and public affairs.

We in Washington, therefore, working with our colleagues at the State and local levels are seeking continued improvement in the educational process that assures quality education for all individuals.

We have invited leaders of business, labor, civic and community groups to work with educators and school officials as partners in support and improvement of education.

Until quite recently, the Asian-American community in the United States has been relatively silent in expressing its needs and interests. Except for isolated instances, this community has remained outside the mainstream of involvement with government programs and agencies.

This has been particularly true at the Federal level. Most of us in the Federal bureaucracy in Washington have had little involvement with this community.

During the past two decades the Federal Government has become immersed in programs for training, education, health, business and housing to name a few. There have been programs focusing on Blacks, Spanish-speaking-Americans, Native American Indians, veterans, ex-offenders, women, and youth. The programs specifically aimed at or involving a significant number of Asian-Americans have been few in number.

The underlying reasons for this are many. I am certain that you are more familiar with these reasons than I. And, given the context of the social milieu in recent years, they are perhaps valid reasons.

I believe they can be summed up in one word -- tradition. It has been traditional among Asian-American groups for the community to look after those in need and to assist them to adjust to new situations. Assimilation, to whatever degree it was desired, was a community affair. Close familial and kinship ties mitigated discussion of one's difficulties with outsiders. These factors, coupled with an intense self-determinism ethnic among the Asian-Americans, eschewed the probability of seeking government assistance.

To be totally honest, I must confess that I have just described only one edge of a double-edged sword.

The fact remains that the government, including those of us in Washington who are supposed to be "tuned in" to the needs of all Americans, did not make any serious effort until recent years to extend its hand in the direction of the Asian-American community. I have found it difficult to comprehend how a group of Americans totalling over 1.3 million people could be so blatantly overlooked.

I can now say with certainty that this situation is being rectified. Thankfully, more and more government-sponsored programs are reaching out into the Asian-American community. Some are under the umbrella of "minority programs." Others are directed specifically to the needs of Asian-Americans such as the Business Education and Training Center for Asian-Americans established here at Lincoln University last year.

Thankfully, the Asian-American community has recognized that in 1973 there is no stigma attached to involvement in government programs. And, thankfully, leadership for these programs is centered in such stolid institutions as Lincoln Univeristy.

Many of the projects and programs emanating from our office, particularly from our Division of Adult Education and Division of Manpower Development and Training have been spearheading the Asian-American message in Washington. My close and warm relationship with the president of this university, Dr. T. Kong Lee, has given me an acute interest and working knowledge of the problems of the Asian-Americans. I have been both enlightened and honored by his friendship.

As Chairman of the National Task Force on Education and Training for Minority Business Enterprise, I have called on Dr. Lee's services many times. He has been one of the primary conduits whereby the Task Force membership was made aware of the Asian-American situation. It was his efforts which enabled us to receive testimony from representatives of the entire spectrum of the Asian-American community in San Francisco in March of this year. And it was his efforts which enabled the Task Force to develop recommendations from strategies and programs for developing entrepreneurial potential in the Asian-American community. In addition to his outstanding contribution as a member of the Task Force on Education and Training for Minority Business Enterprise, Dr. T. Kong Lee has served admirably as a member of President Nixon's Advisory Council on Adult Education. Dr. Lee

and his colleagues have made a significant impact on the Congress and the Administration. They are strongly advocating an expanded Federal commitment to adult education. A commitment that will assist leaders of adults overcome illiteracy, lack of basic educational skills and inadequate job skills to compete in today's society.

I would like to comment very briefly on the Task Force established by Secretary Elliot Richardson to develop recommendations concerning education and training for minority business enterprise. I particularly want to comment on the work of the Task Force that affects Asian-Americans.

One of the mandates of the Task Force is to make recommendations to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and to the Secretary of Commerce regarding programs and strategies for developing entrepreneurship among the various minority ethnic groups.

In determining what directions to recommend as regards Asian-Americans, the Task Force had to grapple with a number of problems. While there is a good deal of commonality among the various minorities, the differences are oftentimes more dramatic than the similarities.

What are the special challenges facing the Asian-American community in business enterprise? Are traditional family group methods still adequate in developing entrepreneurship? How can the Task Force provide a realistic response to those challenges?

The history of Asian-Americans in the United States represents a case in which poverty, discrimination and ethnic visibility encouraged the development of business ownership. The tendency was for Asian-Americans to start their own small businesses rather than risk employment in the larger community. Some of these small businesses have in fact become very successful enterprises.

These businesses were operated with predominantly ethnic customers at first, partly due to discriminatory practices. They developed their own systems of protection based on clan and district affiliations as well as rotating credit associations. As I noted earlier, these groups existed without help from public institutions, carrying on mutual assistance among themselves. The success of the businesses was due in large part to the mutual support of the culturally and morally bound community. The major businesses were restaurants, laundries, groceries, import outlets, and small retail stores. In some instances cooperative farming was pursued.

How does all this fit into the current environment for minority enterprise development? The old systems are fast disappearing. Today's Asian-American youth does not see restaurant or laundry ownership, or

collective farming, as the kind of life to achieve maximum fulfillment.

But can the Asian-American entrepreneurial spirit be kept alive and allowed to expand into areas from which it was once excluded? The Task Force says yes, and proposes the following:

1. In all programs focusing on Asian-American entrepreneurial development a clear distinction should be made between new immigrants and native born persons. The particular needs of these two groups should be identified and individually approached.

2. As required Asian-American businessmen should be taught English skills, particularly American usage. This in turn will serve to sharpen communications skills and to bridge the cultural gap existing between the Asian-American businessman and the mainstream of American business.

3. Asian-American youth should be oriented to the world of business at an early age. This orientation should take place from elementary through high school and should be conducted by representatives of business and industry. The focus should be on administering innovative business opportunities to youth rather than reinforcing the traditional ones.

4. Sophisticated management training programs such as the one offered by Lincoln University should be expanded. These programs should be provided to existing, prospective and potential Asian-American businessmen. The courses offered should include financial control and accounting, marketing and salesmanship, small business management, business communication, business law, and public relations. Teaching managerial skills is a top priority.

5. Technical assistance should be provided to existing businesses as needed.

6. Government outreach to small businessmen regarding education, training, and business loans should be expanded.

7. Advisory boards of local businessmen should be established to assist other entrepreneurs in their community.

8. An administrative project should be established whereby a group of trainees would form their own business and operate under the guidance of successful entrepreneurs.

The Task Force views the Lincoln University Asian-American Business Education Center as an excellent pilot program which has demonstrated how a private university working with the business

community and the Federal, State, and local governments can make a major contribution to the education of an important minority group.

We need to consider the possibility of establishing similar centers in cities, such as: Los Angeles, San Diego, New York City, Chicago and other metropolitan areas with large numbers of Asian-Americans.

To each of you graduating today, I urge you to dedicate yourself to the improvement of the educational opportunities of persons less fortunate than you throughout the world. As you pass this significant milestone in your own personal development, let me urge you to continue education throughout your lifetime. Remember that education is a life-long process. Urge others to achieve what you have achieved for it is only through education that the world can accomplish what Confucius called the "Great Commonwealth."

My personal congratulations and best wishes to all of you. Thank you very much for inviting me to be with you in this beautiful city by the Bay.